

Testimony of Andy Barnett  
Wallingford, CT  
United Action of Connecticut

My name is Andy Barnett from Wallingford, CT. I am testifying today as a member of United Action of Connecticut, a collection of dozens of churches representing thousands of members across the central and eastern portions of the state. I too, am very concerned that in this great state, we have 400,000 people who lack access to health care. Access to health care is a necessity of life...in the same category as food, clothing and shelter. We have been moved to push for health care reform because of the plight of these people who lack this basic necessity. I am concerned, however, that in the push to apply a quick fix, we may apply a band-aid to what amounts to a gaping wound. The inadequacy of the current health care system isn't limited to people who lack access. The current system doesn't work well for any of us.

I come to you today as the "best case scenario" in our current health care system. I work for a large, international corporation, IBM, which has the resources to provide excellent health care benefits. I need to point out that my comments today are my own personal opinions and do not reflect an IBM position. Taking full advantage of its size and resources, IBM has worked aggressively to negotiate better health care premiums for its employees. They have been at the forefront of wellness care and the management of chronic conditions. Each year, I am given a choice of 4 – 6 options for medical coverage as well as several choices for dental and vision coverage. I also have the opportunity to participate in a Health Care Reimbursement Account and a Health Savings Account. Despite these efforts to keep health care affordable, my personal medical expenses have gone up 878% over the last 6 years. My out-of-pocket medical expenses as represented by my Health Care Reimbursement Account have gone up

1255% over the same period. The cost of health care, even for those of us who have access, is spiraling out of control. Please remember, I'm the "best case scenario". Imagine the financial picture for employees of smaller companies and businesses.

This situation calls for solutions much broader than an expansion of the Husky program or a new type of medical insurance policy. The insurance companies have already had decades to fix this problem. Instead, we have more people without access, doctors and hospitals who aren't getting reimbursed fairly and insurance companies making record profits. This situation clearly calls for us to "reengineer" our health care system. This situation calls for us to move to a Universal Health Care model based on IOM principles. The Universal Health Care Foundation has shown through a thorough study that a universal health care model would work in Connecticut. It would cover everyone, save money for businesses, residents and state government, provide quality controls and ensure that health care providers are reimbursed at fair rates. Similar systems have been implemented successfully in other states and other countries. All we need is the political will to stand up, declare health care to be a right for all our citizens and the courage to lead this state to a better solution. We stand at a health care crossroads. My hope is that history will look back on the 2007 Legislative session as the time when legislators had the courage and wisdom to move the state boldly forward by instituting universal health care based on the IOM principles.